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Japan Establishes new Standards for the Use of Recycled Paper

Report Categories:

Sanitary/Phytosanitary/Food Safety

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Report Highlights:

On June 14, 2012, the Government of Japan (GOJ) announced the "Establishment of Standards for the Use of Recycled Paper." The domestic comment period for these changes will close on June 28, 2012. After the domestic comment period closes, the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare (MHLW) will then notify these proposed changes to the WTO/SPS committee, which will then provide another opportunity for submission of public comments on this subject.

General Information:

On June 14, 2012, the GOJ held a meeting for embassies to announce "Establishment of Standards for the Use of Recycled Paper." The comment period for these proposed changes ends June 28, 2012. Any comments should be submitted to the MHLW as soon as possible.

MHLW will also notify these proposed changes to the WTO/SPS committee, which will provide another chance for public comments to be submitted on this subject. The actual WTO/SPS notifications can be found at the site below. http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/sps_e/work_and_doc_e.htm

After the WTO comment period closes, a final report will be released based on the conclusions reached by a session of the Pharmaceutical Affairs and Food Sanitation Council slated to be held at a later date. This report will constitute as a final decision.

Comments to GOJ can be made either in Japanese or English and can be sent directly to the point of contact below:

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Post suggests that the U.S. Embassy - Tokyo also be copied on any comments at agtokyo@usda.gov so these can be included as part of the official U.S. Government comments to the WTO.

Summary

Containers and packaging items for food are subject to the Specifications and Standards for Food, Food Additives, Etc. (Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare Notification No. 370, 1959).

In recent years, recovered paper has often been recycled as cardboard boxes or paperboards for foods. However, the Food Sanitation Act does not provide any regulation for the use of recycled paper. Findings show that chemical substances in recycled paper which are derived from printing inks of recovered paper can leak in large quantities. In addition, if recycled paper used as food packaging comes into direct contact with watery or oily food, or is heated with food at a high temperature, its composite itself will be destroyed, which can help accelerate the migration of substances remaining in the recycled paper on to the food.

The Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare has decided to establish standards for the use of recycled paper for the purposes of food safety.

Outline of new standards

Recycled paper shall not be used for paper-made utensils, containers, or packaging items that are intended to be used in a manner that the water or oil content of them increases greatly, or in a manner that they are heated with foods by a microwave oven or conventional oven for a long time.

Examples of the products that are intended for the above-mentioned uses are paper coffer filters, oil filters, empty tea packs, paper baking molds, cooking papers, and baking paper boards.